Trifles Design Worksheet

1. The way an audience perceives the play is shaped by the choice of performance venue, as well as the set that is designed for the play. Indeed, all the elements that you see and hear during a performance are bound to shape your perception of the play. Which of the following venues do you think can best meet the needs of the play?

Proscenium

Arena

**Thrust**

Flexible

Given the details in the script, why do you think it is the best venue for a production?

I think a thrust stage would best suite this play. With this kind of performance space, the men could easily disappear offstage when they go “upstairs,” leaving the women alone on stage to carry out their investigation. The women could also pull forward into the far downstage area of the stage so they are closer to the audience as they make their important discoveries.

2. What are some of the challenges posed by the play on the design team?

To achieve the dreary and abandoned feel the set needs, a great amount of detailed props would need to be used. Textured farmhouse items like baskets, pans, and quilts would need to fill the stage. Also, the lighting needs to reflect the cold and unwelcoming atmosphere outside, then brighten a little as the guests step inside to the fire. The set should also have multiple areas to it so the ladies can move from the kitchen to the living room - achieved perhaps by a table and rocking chairs. It would also be nice if the set included doors for the characters to enter and exit from.

3. Choose a character from the play and suggest how she/he should be dressed. In what ways do you think the costume would help accentuate his/her character?

The young attorney, I imagine would be dressed in professional attire appropriate to the early 20th century, complete with an overcoat, hat, neck tie, and vest. His costume should reflect his fastidious nature, for he repeatedly worries about evidence and orders people around. In my mind, he thinks a little more highly of himself than he ought to and probably carries himself with an air of importance. This character trait could be brought out in his well kept clothing.

4. Given the content of the play, how might the lighting design help further the mood of the production?

As I mentioned earlier, the lighting outside should be grey and dreary and lighten a little when the characters enter the house. Not too much though since this play has a sinister and uncertain feel to it. I would light it mostly in cool tones, possibly from the sides of the stage so the audience would see some unnerving shadows on the floor. The house is abandoned after all, so the lighting should reflect this lack of care and point towards the cruel deed(s) which took place there.

5. Suggest music or sound effects that might be used to accentuate the mood or atmosphere of the play and the transitions between parts of the play.

Roaring wind would be fantastic in the beginning. Also, adding the sound of creaking steps as the men go upstairs would set the audience on edge. While the women explore the house, I imagine it would be rather quite so all the attention is on them as they piece together what happened there. For scene changes, I would play period music, possibly even religious music to emphasize the death of Mr. Wright.